



## **NEWS FROM NOAA**

### **NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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#### **NOAA Fisheries to Sponsor Public Meetings on Makah Whale-Hunt Proposal**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's fisheries service (NOAA Fisheries) said today that it will hold public meetings this October to solicit citizens' comments and advice on a proposal by the Makah Indian tribe to continue hunting gray whales off Washington's Olympic peninsula.

The meetings are part of a review under federal environmental law that will eventually lead to publication by NOAA Fisheries of an environmental impact statement (EIS) on proposed gray whale hunting. The environmental review and EIS were triggered by the Makah's request last February for a waiver of whaling restrictions imposed by the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA).

A federal appeals court ruled last year that the tribe, although it has specific treaty rights that allow whaling, must comply with the MMPA and obtain a waiver from NOAA Fisheries before it can proceed with a hunt.

An EIS analyzes the environmental effects of a proposed action – in this case whaling – and offers alternatives. The typical goal of an EIS is to identify ways to minimize harmful environmental effects of an action.

The Makah tribe killed one gray whale in the spring of 1999 under an aboriginal subsistence quota granted to the United States by the International Whaling Commission (IWC). Since then, however, due in part to ongoing litigation, the tribe has not hunted gray whales.

The Makah are proposing to hunt up to 20 gray whales during a five-year period, with a maximum of five whales landed in any one year and subject to any quotas from the IWC.

The public meetings are scheduled for Oct. 5 at the Makah Tribal Council Community Hall in Neah Bay, Oct. 6 at the Vern Burton Memorial Community Center in Port Angeles, and Oct. 11 at the Naval Reserve Building in South Lake Union Park in Seattle. All the meetings will start at 6:30 p.m.

A [Federal Register](#) notice was published today describing the public meetings and EIS. A copy of the *Federal Register* notice and other information is available on the Northwest Region's Website at <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/mmammals/graywhales/index.html>.

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NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitats through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

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On the Web:

NOAA Fisheries Service: [www.nmfs.noaa.gov](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov)

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